

Ex 1822

DOCUMENT No. 5302

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Evidence of NX 1677 Private VERDUN CLIVE BALL.

Verdun Clive Ball, being duly sworn by His Honour, states:

My full number, name, rank and unit are NX 1677 Private Verdun Clive Ball, 8th Division A.A.S.C., attached to 2/21 Aust. Infantry Battalion. My home address is Caswell Street, Peak Hill, New South Wales.

I was captured on 3 February 1942 and confined in Tan Toey camp. I was released on 10 September, 1945.

I saw the bashing of the Dutch personnel from the camp. I cannot identify any of the Japanese guards involved. The distance from the camp to the hill where the beating took place was about 150 yards. The guards who did the bashing were not local guards and were taken away later.

I was one of the 23 Australians who were beaten. We volunteered the information that we had broken camp. A certain number were taken from the camp and eight of the remainder volunteered their names. We were told the punishment would be lighter if we did this. I was taken to the same Japanese Headquarters on the hill outside the camp. We went before a Japanese Island Commander, Capt. Handor, who asked us question through an interpreter. In the room we were bashed with pick handles in front of the captain. One of the guards who bashed me was nicknamed "Horseface".

After we had been beaten in the room we were taken outside and tied together in a row, with one hand in front and one behind. Whilst I was there I saw Ikiuchi come out and belt one of the Australians who was there when we arrived with a pick handle. He had a broken arm and was belted all over the back.

I was bashed again that night and tied up for the night. This occurred about dusk. We were tied around a tree in a ring, making a complete circle. We had to stay there all night and were not allowed to lean back against the tree. When we asked for water individual guards would give us a drink. We did not get any food until the next morning, when the usual ration of rice was brought up from the camp.

Next day I was again bashed; this was the heaviest beating of them all. The Japanese guards beat us with pick handles and pieces of bowser pipes. I was hit mostly from the small of the back down to the knees. I do not know the names of the men involved but I could identify them by sight. They were regular prison guards at the time but were later shifted. Two are still on Ambon Island; there may be a lot more but I have not seen them.

While I was at the Headquarters, I saw a truck come up. Ten men were loaded on to the truck and one into a motor car. He was completely unconscious and may have been dead. I do not know what had happened to these eleven men as they were at the Headquarters before we arrived. During that time I know they were bashed because we could hear them screaming practically every night. They were tortured by some of the guards privately. I never saw those eleven men again after they had been taken away.

The Japanese guards put lighted cigarettes on the back of my neck and once on my forehead. They used to flick me with their fingers in the one spot on the forehead for a considerable time to give me a headache. I saw them put lighted cigarettes on some of the Australians' noses to put them out.

Some of the men who were with me when I was bashed received worse treatment than I did; they lay down and were kicked and tied up. I was put in hospital as a result of the beating but the Japanese sent down word that I was not to be kept in hospital and I was then sent back to the hut. I was in bed for about three weeks. I practically lost the use of my legs and for three or four months after I was just able to get about by shuffling. Gradually I regained my strength. I did light work and was ordered by the doctor not to go out to work. However, I did a little work later on on the working parties.

I was present when Private Tait was beaten, in about September 1944. He was accused of stealing binoculars from an air raid shelter. He was brought back to the camp and I saw everything from the kitchen where I was working. He was bashed at the guard house in the camp and was only about 30 yards away from me, across the road. He was beaten by a guard nicknamed "Frillneck". Ichiuchi was present and saw the bashing. When the Commandant came out, he hit him a couple of times on the head with a light stick and rolled him over a couple of times so that the other guard could hit him more. W/O Weimura was also present.

Private Tait was beaten with pick handles. Two pick handles were broken on him; eventually they got one strong enough. He was knocked unconscious two or three times; then the Commandant threw water over him and when he came to he was beaten again. In the end, he was left lying in the rain for about half an hour. Our Officer tried all the time to have him removed and eventually he was taken away to hospital on a stretcher. He never recovered properly. He lost the use of his legs and could only just get about. Eventually, he died.

Not many of the Australians who were beaten lost the use of their legs as much as I did; those who were fat did not suffer so badly

but the thin ones did. My normal weight is 10 stone 7 lbs., but my weight when I came out of camp was about 9 stone. I was down to about 8 stone 7 lbs. at one time.

Up till one year ago the food was reasonable; you could live on it. During the last year, however, from August until the end of the war the rations were about 4 ounces of rice per day and a small issue of rotten potatoes that no-one else could eat.

It was a regular thing for someone to be beaten every morning, or jumped on or kicked. We were beaten for not being able to get about quickly or for being a bit late in coming out of our huts; it was generally for very paltry things. Ikiuchi was the main one who beat them on sores or ulcers. He hit Major Westley one day on an ulcer for being late on parade.

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I certify that the above evidence is true and correct.

Taken and sworn before me at Morotai )

on this 25th day of September 1945 )

A. Mansfield )

Commissioner )

V.C. BALL